

Strange Meeting 3

January 2009.

Available for free from Stephen Agar, 4 Cedars Gardens, BRIGHTON, BN1 6YD, UK.
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DEADLINE = MIDNIGHT (GMT) FRIDAY 23rd JANUARY

IDLE THOUGHTS

Apologies for this issue being a little late (though the games have been kept moving to schedule). Over the past month I have just been so ill – non-stop coughing, headaches, sore throat etc. I've just never had a cold like this one, it just won't let go. And then there was Xmas – lots of time with the kids and my father, who came down to stay for a few days.

Kate and Freddie are 14 and 12 respectively, so I think the magic of Christmas is just starting to wear off for them, though of course they do like to receive presents. I spent Christmas Day with the kids and Esme (my ex) at a friends house. Annie, Patrick and Ioanna had kindly invited us along to share their Xmas. Even after three years of separation, I think it is nice that we can still do some things as a family.

The news that Tom Tweedy died on Christmas Day was a shock. I remember numerous very long telephone conversations with the Tweedys back in the 70's when I was a mere teenager – and you couldn't just talk to Tom as Jan was always commenting (and shrieking with laughter) from the background. Tom was a genuinely nice person, who seemed to see the best in people. I wasn't involved in the hobby during the 80's when Tom was running his zine **Dib Dib Dib**, but we re-connected in the 90's and Tom ran games of Sopwith in **Spring Offensive** which eventually led to him establishing the **Dip2000** web site. As a tribute I have written an article on **Dib Dib Dib** which you will find inside. May you rest in peace, Tom. You made the world a better place.

A couple of old-timers have sent in contributions for this issue – thanks to Toby Harris (ex-editor of **Smodnoc** and **The Freaky Fungus**) and Craig Nye (ex-editor of **Retief**). For anyone interested in Craig's past – the full run of **Retief**

is available at www.diplomacyzines.org.uk.

Apart from those contributions and a very small letter column (in the immortal words of Lynsey De Paul, *Won't Somebody Write To Me?*), this whole issue is dedicated to an article on **Dib Dib Dib** and some reprints of articles I found there while reading all 87 issues (some 1750 pages!).

I'm quite pleased that so far we have avoided any NMRs in the games – well done guys. However, the waiting lists has not moved since last time, so maybe I had better put more effort into drumming up some business.

SOME ZINES SEEN

Graustark¹ issue 787 (the first ever postal Diplomacy zine and still going!) arrived just before Christmas. John has always had an interest in fiction and history – and this issue has an interesting piece on Pearl Harbor. I am indebted to John as he has been sending me **Graustarks** even when he has had little in return. Must find a way to make it up to him.

The nearest thing we have to John Boardman in the UK is John Marsden, even down to their liberal politics. Our John has just published **Ode**² 300, clearly the longest running zine in UK Diplomacy history – the first one to reach 300 issues. John has been continually publishing for over 29 years and next October will celebrate its 30th anniversary. I enjoyed issue 300 which included a potted summary of 300 issues of **Ode**, and article on NMRs from Bob Brown (ex-editor of **The Tinamou** – but who I also remember as the organiser of PolyCon), a

¹ John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302, USA.

² John Marsden, 91 Westwood Avenue, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 9RS.

crossword from Mog Firth and an interesting travel piece from Des Langford on Peru. John has lists open for Diplomacy, Railway Rivals, Acquire, Maneater, Choice and Puerto Rico.

I know my eye sight is getting bad, but there's no way I can even read **Obsidian**³ 154 without strong reading glasses. Although the zine only covers two sides of a piece of A4, I suspect that a decent font size could have doubled the length of the zine easily. A little treasure this zine and as Alex says although it has taken him 22 years to get the hang of regular zine production, he's discovered it now. This issue had his first Diplomacy gamestart in nine years – go on, subscribe and let's see if we can get him another game going in 2009.

For Whom the Die Rolls⁴ 159 is another mammoth effort from Keith Thomasson, who also sent me some early **Griffins** to complete the Zine Archive set – though sadly copies of **Forden's Epitaph** in which the first issue appeared still elude me. This issue includes a 10 page list of all the new games on show at Essen this year – which with 150,000 attendees over 4 days must make it the largest Games Fair on Earth. Keith carries for too many games for me to include a list here – but if you want to play it postally, you'll probably find it in **FWTDR**. Keith doesn't include **Strange Meeting** 2 in his list of zines received – if it hasn't turned up Keith, let me know and I'll send you another one.

LETTERS

Richard Williams

I think I had better clarify a few things regarding my Internet stance. I have access to the Internet, but I don't feel the need to use it that much. I use it more now I have broadband, but not a great deal more than dial-up. But I don't do any diplomacy by email except to inform the GM of errors. So all orders and negotiations I do by post. I haven't played email Diplomacy since the mid 1980's. I just didn't enjoy it, including getting phone calls at any time of the day.

Now nearly everyone I know respects that, as some I know well and I have email contact with.

³ Alex Richardson, 43 Letchworth Road, baldock, Herts, SG7 6AA.

⁴ Keith Thomasson, 14 Stepnells, Marsworth, Near Tring, Herts, HP23 4NQ

But on a couple of occasions after a GM has sent out corrections, a few people have got my email address and will use it. When they have done so, I have pointed out the error of their ways and only in one case did they not take the hint. The game has been in progress for a long time and even as neighbours he has not corresponded at all since. Quite amusingly, in one case, although I have never met him, one person lives 2 or 3 miles away and hand delivers about 90% of his letters, as he doesn't want to queue for stamps and its just as quick to deliver them himself.

SA: Well, you don't have to queue for stamps if you buy them with your groceries.

My argument is I have chosen to play by post. How do you think others would react if I fjoined an email game and announced I would only use Royal Mail. So if I play by post, why should I be expected to play by email?

SA: Don't really disagree with anything you say, Richard. However, I don't think you can equate email games with getting phone calls – I think that is even more likely to happen in postal games. But just as you can't stop the other players in a postal game from using the telephone, you can't stop them for using email between themselves if they want to. That was what I was trying to achieve, a game where everyone agrees to communicate by post if some players want to diplome that way, but which doesn't prohibit the use of email between consenting adults.

As for putting me on the waiting list, for the moment certainly not as I will not play against Garyth Wright. He recently dropped out of a number of games running them, on top of that he didn't correspond the two years before that. So whatever happens playing him is a pointless exercise.

SA: I think Garyth will have to defend himself on that one, but it does give me an idea for an article...

Alex Richardson

A quick note to thank you for setting up the Library of UK Diplomacy zines which has already threatened to push the usage of my broadband connection into the realms of the "unfair". I appreciate your concentration on the hobby of the seventies, as it gives me a chance to find out just what the old-timers I knew had to be so smug about. Plenty, as it turns out.

SA: Thanks. I feel it hard to be as enthusiastic about the 80's and anyway the 80's just seem so recent – but I will get round to them.

Ethil the Frog, **Fall of Eagles** and **Greatest hits** are perhaps my favourites so far. There's a bit in **GH** 1 which made me laugh, where Pete Birks talks so casually about taking on just ten Dip games for now – such a contrast with today when you'd be hard pressed to dredge up ten players, never mind open ten games. I notice that **Ethil the Frog** 3, meanwhile, mentions a report in another zine on a Dip game played between Michel Feron and Michael Frayn. Could this be **the** Michael Frayn, do you think?

SA: I suspect not, unless he's French. I may even have this zine somewhere – my European and US zines are not catalogued.



Craig's Chronicle

This is the time of year for lists and last night on TV there was a countdown of the top 50 most annoying people of 2008. Aha, I thought, this will be just the job to get Nye into vituperative mode. I was a little disappointed; a majority of those featured I had never or hardly heard of. On the basis of what was said about those I am uninformed about I didn't see anyone who gave me a sudden urge to transport them to the Gaza Strip. Rather, they seemed a depressing and pathetic bunch of "**celebrities**".

I am not the greatest admirer of the world wide celebrity culture. Certainly someone who wins multiple Olympic gold medals or some similar achievement such as a Nobel Prize is entitled to a degree of approbation. But a substantial number seem to have done no more than attract media attention. I am unconcerned by what others do in privacy as long as it does not involve abuse of others, human or otherwise, or frightens the horses. Yet the magazine shelves are full of journals which, by the covers, let one into just such an arena, for a fee. Therefore these glossy grub street publications sell, ergo

someone is avidly buying them. I trust it is not my reader.

Then right at the end of the list the No 1 was another person I've never heard of. I was dozing off by then but she seems to be some kind of model called Angus⁵ something or other, except Angus is spelt rather oddly for reasons that have something to do with pseudoscience. Suddenly I was galvanised! She spoke and every second phrase was "**You know what I mean**". No dear, I do not **know** what you mean. We have this thing called language to express ourselves. Our cats speak more coherently than those whose conversation is larded with that phrase. I feel so much better now, you know what I mean?

Well it's 2009. This is a point when itinerant diarists, such as myself, either look back on 2008 or forward to 2009. Decisions, decisions; since the past can bury it's own dead we'll go forward. So time for the Old Moore's Almanac bit: There are only two certainties; that this will not be accurate and that everyone else who attempts it will be equally wrong. The trick will be in not rehashing 2008.

In quantum theory, the multiverse hypothesis allows the remote possibility of time travel into the past. I hate to disappoint Doctor Who fans but travel into the future is impossible as it, the future, doesn't exist yet. Of course, since I started this piece time has passed and we have all moved a bit into the future, except that future is now the past. Isn't this fun?

Incredible, something I had not anticipated, someone has just put flyer leaflets for a curry house, a pizza service and a charcoal grill through the letterbox - on New Years Day! Now I realise that essential and emergency services must operate, but delivering unsolicited advertising? And the curry house is open today, which is clever as all those who were carousing till the wee hours are probably thinking, "I could murder a Tandoori".

Back to the subject, let's start with the news: I hear that Russians have turned off the gas in the Ukraine. I can't help wondering, before they do this do they send statutory warning notices? "Dear Ukraine, since you haven't paid the bill, we're turning off the gas, love Vlad". Israel is continuing to turn the Gaza Strip into the Gaza Parking Lot. (No that is not a typo). Of course,

⁵ Agyness Dean (Ed.)

Hamas still think it's November 5th and are celebrating with fireworks. Deep joy.

To predictions: Obama becomes US President in 19 days and along with Gordon Brown will save the world: If he remembers to cancel the Dallas visit of course. Britain's cunning plan to enter the Eurozone by devaluing the Pound to the same value as the Euro will fail due to opposition from Iceland a country which has taken to heart the ancient dictum, "borrow £1 and the bank owns you, borrow £1,000,000 and you own the bank". (The amounts should be updated to allow for inflation, that's why it's an ancient dictum).

Let's turn to the celebrities of 2008. (If you feel I'm being inconsistent, you are right, but Ralph Waldo Emerson is on my side). Robert Preston will be on Strictly Come Dancing doing the Um Um Um which is like the Cha Cha Cha. Peter Birks will have a scary experience in a shop. Jonathan Palfrey will publish more incriminating photos. Geoff Challerger will sue the MOD for copyright on the name of a tank. Stephen Agar will win the Guinness Book of Records prize for the most web sites. Craig Nye will become the subject of a new Facebook group: **"The Most Unpopular and Boring Postal Diplomacy Person on Facebook"**.

French NDC 2008

12-14 December 2008

by Toby Harris

There were around 20 foreign players there, which was truly a fantastic turnout from across the rest of Europe. The best I've known (save any World Championships they've hosted of course) so despite knobbly hobby pawns crowing that language is an issue, it's not; everyone speaks English.

I took to Paris a few days early this year to catch up with some of the 'retired' dip players before the main event. Food was very fancy, but wasted on me. I even learned that apparently some snails are so highly regarded (by their shell style, size & colour) that the shells are washed out afterwards and a "fresh" (lower quality) snail shoved in for the next diner!

The Friday evening was a meet-and-greet; a few glasses of wine followed by a really amazing night out because the Diplomacy was

to start on the Saturday morning. It was such a great night out I was still awake by morning, aided and abetted by one of the Germans. So by morning I wanted to see just how hard core this guy was and managed to drag him to the first Dip game. Poor guy, he was ready for bed, but a few jibes at his youth, stamina, nationality and a reminder of why he'd come soon got him to the tournament elsewhere in the hotel.

But our arrival at the Dip scene for the first round was too late (by a few minutes) and the tournament had started without us. As luck would have it five more players were on their way (late also).... The Belgians. Hurrah! A French National Championships with five Belgians, a German and a Brit. Sounds like easy pickings, even on a morning-after auto-pilot. Hey, don't knock it, I've played auto-pilot enough times now to still rack up a good score and on this occasion missed the top spot by just one centre. Second place is not so bad for round one. Great ... just need the same again in round two ...

A couple of hours between the first & second rounds meant a chance for some sleep. And I woke up just before round two ... had finished. D'uh! Ok, so still in time for the social Saturday night out at least ;-) But to be realistic had to take that easy as well and opted for a bit of rest instead.

So all rested on the Sunday morning game. Bright and breezy (one of the first up) a high score would secure a place in the final (probably). But it was not to be: a Turkey which went 4-3-2-1-0. All the others were especially apologetic until I explained "hey, no worries, I have in fact been eliminated before ... lots of times!"

So far I've avoided name-dropping but here's a name that does need a mention: Xavier Blanchot. He played Germany and whilst he's not quite the same energetic player of his 1990's youth, he does still have something special as a player. Italy had tried to open to Tyrolia and Xavier bounced him (unexpected for Italy). The way Xavier explained it was first to have Italy (and the rest of the board) appreciate that Xavier has ESP and therefore KNOWS what Italy was going to do, and for this reason he bounced him. He's one of the very few players who can have you believing that the reason for his move was because "he knew what you were about to do". And if you play with this philosophy then you can justify almost any

move or stab you ever make in the game. And that's Xavier for you.

The final round I missed as well; not out of "well I can't win, so why should I play?" but more out of tiredness, and perhaps a little less energy than in previous years.

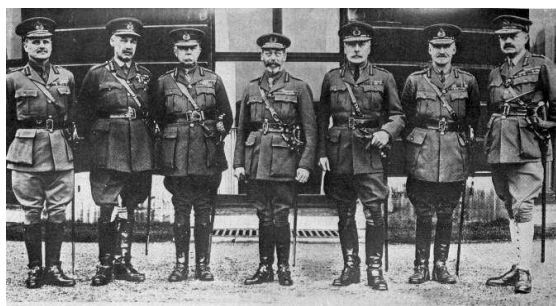
Some had to leave early, but I stuck around for the awards, applauding all who claimed their best countries, best diplomats, top sevens, team awards, best Chetans, grand prix awards and just about everything else. And expecting nothing for myself it was quite pleasant to watch all the happy faces get their prizes.

The winner was a new-ish, hungry player called Marvin. A cheeky faced guy with all the energy you need to win.

I was totally shocked to win the final award of the tournament; "Le Choix Des Organistateurs" it says on the certificate. But in reality I think it was more an award to cover a longer Diplomacy history rather than just one tournament. The certificate was accompanied with a beautifully wooden-boxed & wax-sealed bottle of wine the height of Mia (my 3-year-old daughter). Yup, it's one big muvva of a bottle of wine :-). There was only one thing I could say: "this <the certificate, held high> I will treasure for a lifetime, whilst this <the wine, held not so high because it's heavy> will be treasured for an hour".

And that was that. A few remained and we went out for one final bash, well into the early hours before a big hangover on Monday in a rush to catch the plane home.

Hell, what a great weekend. Over the 6 days I was there I played just 20 moves and for five hours (two early finishes: 1906 and 1904). Diplomacy tournaments aren't all about the Diplomacy; the best part was catching up with old friends.



Dib Dib Dib

Editor: Tom Tweedy

Issues 1 – 75; 76 – 87

(October 1980 – February 1988;
May 1997 – December 1998)

Dib Dib Dib started life as a Sopwith waiting list in **Chimaera** 64 back in June 1980. Tom had enough players for a gamestart by September and from October onwards **Dib** was distributed as a players only photocopied game report. These were the first ever games of postal Sopwith ever run. I only have a copy of issue 4 from this period and I doubt I will ever be able to track down issues 1-3 and 5-6 now. However, by issue 7 Tom had enough players for a game of Diplomacy and so he decided to launch his own independent zine in March 1981. From the first independent issue Tom used the trademark yellow cover and foolscap sized paper that would last him until the zine finally folded. As Tom had been active in the hobby since 1976 he already had a pretty good idea of what he wanted from his zine, namely a Diplomacy focus, a good-natured lettercol and a feud free atmosphere. The zine did well, attracting not only subscribers from **Chimera**, but also old hobby stalwarts such as John Piggott and Richard Sharp.

Tom was more of an editor than a writer. Indeed, putting aside editorials and the letter column, Tom only rarely wrote articles for **Dib**. However, he was an excellent editor and the **Dib** letter column was probably the best (and longest) letter column of its day (winning the Gladys Award for best letter column three years out of four between in 1983 and 1986). That's not to say that Tom couldn't write – I particularly liked his observation that being in a game GM'd by Chris Tringham was "something akin to sawing one's head off with a blunt frying pan while reading a copy of Tolstoy's War & Peace."

Tom wasn't afraid to discuss real political issues in the zine and his subscribers weren't afraid to write in with all sorts of extreme opinions. Occasional Tom would let out a clue about his old life (he was an Army bomb disposal diver from 1968 – 1973), but only those who met him in person would discover that Tom was confined to a wheelchair (as the result of a sniper), as he never mentioned it in print. One thing Tom did

mention was that he regretted calling the zine **Dib Dib Dib** (a reference to the cub scout promise) and the only reason he hadn't changed it is that he would have felt morally obliged to go back to issue number 1 and start again.

Reading the back issues now, sometimes it seems like a different world. It certainly was in computing terms, witness the debate in issue 10 about the relative merits of the Tandy compared to an Atari. Tom bemoaned the fact that Jan wouldn't let him buy a computer. By issue 14 she had relented and he was buying an Apple II. And of course in the early issues there was the usual discussion about whether the hobby was in terminal decline – something it would avoid for almost another 20 years.

Early issues had some fairly serious political debate in the letter column. Tom adopted a centre right position, but in a fairly pleasant tone. His support for the police and capital punishment didn't go down well with the more liberal wing of the hobby (John Marsden described him as the "hobby arch-right-winger").

In Issue 11 (July 1981) came the news that Tom was taking over the Central Gamestart Service (CGS) from Richard Hucknall, something he did efficiently until October 1984 when he passed it on to Nick Kinzett. Issue 11 also carried the news that **Dib Dib Dib** had come 23rd (out of 32) in the 1981 Zine Poll – which was not bad for a new zine which had only put out four issues when the poll was held (the winner was **Greatest Hits** for the third year in a row).

Issue 21 was a trail-blazer in that it was a word-processed zine, albeit produced on a stencil. Tom had managed to hook up his Apple II to a daisywheel printer that could cut stencils. Although we take word processing for granted now, in July 1982 this was fairly revolutionary. That issue also carried the results on the 1982

Zine Poll (won by **Ode**) in which **Dib Dib Dib** came 7th out of 32 zines.

Tom wasn't a particularly aggressive editor who played the hobby political game – but he could be assertive when he believed something wasn't being done properly. He had a go at RYODA (the Martin le Fevre / Rip Gooch collective) when he thought they weren't printing zines efficiently, and he had another go at Pete Calcraft when he felt that the hobby stats weren't being published. His digs usually resulted in some action in the short term.

Although Tom didn't mention his Army career very often, a rare insight was offered in issue 30 when Tom commented on the fact that for two years running he had appeared at the Aldershot Army Display Show as a diver playing chess underwater... clearly a committed games player.

Dib Dib Dib slipped back a bit in the 1983 Zine Poll, coming 15th out of 47 zines (the Poll being won by **Greatest Hits** for the 4th time in 5 years!).

When Tom was sent a copy of the letter Richard Sharp wrote to Martin le Fevre (who printed the then novice package) about Richard starting to run games again for novices, Tom was not keen. His view was that someone who had folded messily and had not repaid subs, should somehow make amends before taking on novice games (Issue 34, November 1983). However, issue 35 brought news that **Dolchstoß** was being

resurrected and sent to all the old subbers, so Tom relented and gave it all his blessing.

Having members of the old Hard Core subbing to **Dib** had its advantages. When one subscriber mentioned that he had a vague memory of seeing a game of Diplomacy on TV, John Piggott supplied a short article for **Dib Dib Dib** 39 (reprinted below) on how he came to be on national TV in 1974. And I particularly liked the article by Richard Sharp in issue 41 on being stabbed by the GM (also reprinted below)



– but in the interest of balance I have also printed John Marsden’s riposte from **Dib** 42.

Like many, Tom was not at all happy with the 1984 Zine Poll (won by **Hopscotch**), which he called a “farce”. The inclusion of all European zines meant that the number of voters went up to 258, but the use of the average voting method to calculate the results allowed grudge votes to carry a lot of weight. Thus **Greatest Hits** which had won the previous year was down to 22nd place! **Dib** came 19th, down 8 places.

March 1985 saw Tom retiring his old Apple II and investing in a Canon A-200 PC, which meant that Tom had to endure a change of Operating System, with all the software changes and data problems that creates – thus issue 47 Tom was forced to produce a games-only issue. Buying a PC for home use as early as 1985 shows what an early-adopter of technology Tom was – I didn’t get my first PC until 1993!

The 1985 Zine Poll saw **Dib** rise back up to 13th place, the Poll itself being won for the first time by **Mad Policy** – and thus having finally won the Zine Poll, Richard Walkerdine could afford to turn it over to John Piggott (a very controversial decision as John said his Poll would only include zines running at least two games of Diplomacy).

Dib 52 saw Tom bemoaning that for the third time a subscriber had written to him dropping out of the zine - this time based on something Tom had said in the letter column. This time it was Mike Pollard who hadn’t appreciated Tom’s views that some of the unemployed were benefits scroungers. Another sign of how technology has changed is that in February 1986 Tom was also bemoaning the fact he would have to pay out over £300 for a 1200 Kbps modem – incredible when you think that you can get modems 40 times as fast as that now for about £8. Almost scary.

By **Dib** 57 (April 1986) Tom had decided that **Dib** was going to get shorter (no editorial, less letters etc.) as he was going to spend the summer house hunting. Still, I don’t think anything can quite excuse Tom for the lapse of taste displayed on the cover of **Dib** 60 (even if he did later claim it was both Jan’s idea and tongue in cheek). By issue 61 Tom had reinstated the full letter column due to popular demand, but still no editorial.

The computer theme was continued in issue 62 (September 1986) when John Cavanagh submitted an article entitled “Electronic Mail – a Medium for Diplomacy?” which is interesting to compare to the present time. As far as I am aware Diplomacy was first played online on CompuServe through a publication produced by Russell Sipe called **The Armchair Diplomat**

which started online in February 1983 (and which I can even remember getting in the early 90’s when it was still going). Some of the early issues are available at Doug Kent’s archive site at <http://www.whiningkentpigs.com/DW/a.htm>

By issue 63 we had the editorials back as well, Tom had purchased a modem and was signed up to “BT Gold” – Tom noted “...it seems likely that electronic mail will come into its own with the average home and hobby member.”

John Piggott’s refocusing of the Zine Poll on Diplomacy, assisted **Dib** which managed 10th place (up from 13th the previous year) despite being thinner over the summer.

The 1986 Zine Poll was won by **Home of the Brave**.

1987 started off by Tom taking the line that the newly formed zine **Springboard** from Danny Collman, which was a novice only zine taking players who responded to the Diplomacy box flyer, was not a good idea, mainly because he thought it would starve other new zines of newcomers. The debate would rage on for years. **Dib** 65 also revealed that Tom had started an online game of Diplomacy on the “West London TBBS” bulletin board. A letter



from Bob Kendrick revealed that Diplomacy had been played on Micronet / Prestel to weekly deadlines on a bulletin board page organised by Justin Barley "for about 4 years" - though they had the house rule of allowing the move F(NAf)-Spa sc!

In **Dib** 67 Tom started printing the reports from the online games he was running in order to get them Boardman Numbers and integrate them with the postal hobby. His hope was that some of the online people would join the postal hobby and vice versa. By then the zine had really returned to its pre-issue 57 size, as Tom's search for a new house with more ground was scaled back. Unusually for a predominantly male hobby, by this stage **Dib's** letter column was fairly regularly dominated by women - namely, Michelle Morris, Kath Collman and Madelaine Smith.

By issue 72 Tom had closed all his waiting lists. Issue 73 had an extended deadline to get over Xmas (although Tom re-opened his Diplomacy waiting list with a game to GM'd by Mike Allaway). Also mentioned was the 1987 Zine Poll results (won by **War & Peace**) with **Dib** 14th out of 46 zines. Issue 74 had a memorable Tom Tweedy quote that "*EMAIL will NEVER supplant the game by post, there's no fear of that...*" But he did have one good point - "the main problem you see is getting steady and reliable email players; mainly because a deterrent against drop-outs in the form of gamefees and suchlike is hard to enforce."

Tom announced the fold of **Dib Dib Dib** in issue 75 (February 1988) and the zine seamlessly folded into a re-launched **Pyrrhic Victory** edited by Mike Allaway. That had been Tom's plan for a few months, but he was waiting for Mike to be in a position to take over. Tom had produced the zine for over 8 years.

As a postscript, **Dib Dib Dib** did rise briefly once more. When I was running **Spring Offensive**, Tom agreed to GM some games of Sopwith for me. I folded **SpOff** at issue 50 and passed the zine on to Gihan Bandaranaike, whose zine **Carpe Diem** failed to seize the day by folding after issue 2. So Tom stepped in to run his games of Sopwith himself, in a mini-zine called **Dib Dib Dib**. Issue 76 came out in May 1997 and things went well until an 8 month gap between issues 78 and 79 as Tom had been in hospital for 5 months. As ever he never even mentioned what had been wrong with him. He started again with **Dib** 79 in April 1998 and kept

going until issue 87 in December when all his existing games had finished. One of the reasons that Tom stopped doing his mini-zine was that more of his time was being taken up by being a webmaster for his other interest (breeding Dalmatians) and the Dip2000 website. But that's another story.

If you would like to read **Dib Dib Dib** go to www.diplomacyzines.org.uk where all the issues in the Archive have been uploaded as PDFs.

The Making Of Hobby History

Memoirs of the Godlike,
John 'Pryderi' Piggott

Well, young 'un, when you've been in the hobby as long as I have (14 years) I hope your past indiscretions will keep catching up with you. I refer, of course, to the Nationwide televised Diplomacy game, and my own shameful appearance therein.

This started as a perfectly normal game - **Courier** 71/9, as I recall. I was playing England, and Graeme Levin (he of the bankrupt retail empire) was France. The headed notepaper belonged to the Russian player, one Peter Robertson , ('Petrovitch Robertsonoff - Tsar of all the Russias'); in fact, although he didn't do well in the game, he hung on until about 1908, long enough to exhaust. his special paper, after which he wrote on ordinary lined paper and signed himself the 'revolutionary' 'Count Nostrebor'.

Anyway, the game lumbered on until by 1910 Graeme had at last got the better of me in our game-long alliance - well, it was a pretty secure alliance by Graeme's normal standards, as he stabbed me only every other move - and I was down to three units. The Nationwide people got involved almost by accident; Graeme was seeking publicity for his first games shop and for Games and Puzzles magazine and I think he just mentioned postal games to them in passing. But they had just improved their arrangements for regional studios so that, for the first time, material from the regions could be transmitted live over the network. It occurred to one of their junior producers that this postal game, with players living in various far-flung

parts of Britain, provided a splendid opportunity to use this new facility.

And so, on 4th April 1974, I found myself travelling the 60 miles from Oxford to Birmingham in an ageing taxi paid for by the BBC. On arrival at Pebble Mill Studios, I was directed to the 'bus shelter' where I was offered a drink of... tea! (The official name for the 'bus shelter' is the 'hospitality room' - something it became only when I sternly demanded whisky and some was brought.) Across the country others were on their way to BBC studios - one to Plymouth, one to Bristol and one to Edinburgh. Graeme Levin was in London.

Came six o'clock and in we went to the studio. First I had to sit quietly for half an hour, with my Diplomacy board set up on a picnic table in front of me, while Tom Coyne read the regional news and introduced other 'Midlands Today' items. At last the big moment arrived. Graeme burred on knowledgeably for a few minutes to Sue Lawley, face to face in the London studio, mainly about his great plans for selling games and how this was a growing market. Then he outlined the strategy he'd used in our own Diplomacy game. Finally Sue Lawley said, "Well, let's go to John Piggott in our Birmingham studio - what did you feel when France attacked you?"

This was the stab. You have heard about people seeming tongue-tied and frozen in front of the TV cameras? That is how I appeared. Yet it was not quite like that - I had my answer prepared; I had even been briefed about the questions which might be asked. What happened was this: In front of me was a monitor - on ordinary black-and-white TV set with the sound turned off. The sound came to me through an earplug. Thus I could see and hear what was going on. What no-one had told me was that there was a second or so delay on these, and as I started to say my piece I heard my own voice coming back at me through the hearing aid - a second or so out of synch, I stumbled over my words, thinking that some other idiot was trying to speak at the same time as me...

I recovered eventually, of course. But the magic had departed from the occasion, and when, a month later, I received my cheque for five guineas, this marked the end of my glittering career as a famous TV personality. A short time afterward I became a civil servant.

Reprinted from **Dib Dib Dib** 39

Stabbed... by the GM

by Richard Sharp

Ratings and statistics in Diplomacy have always held a fascination for half the hobby, the other half considering them a pretentious waste of time. Though I have always counted myself among the fascinated, my recent readings of old stats zines have made me wonder: just how many games of the 1000+ so far completed in Britain would be disregarded on the grounds of improper Giving if we knew the truth? Certainly these, from my own playing career:

1973-BG, in which I played France, was recorded as "abandoned", and I am listed as "dropped out". I had in fact NMR'd by accident in Spring 1912 - just one of those things, where you wait a day too long for a letter that never comes. Fortunately, the GM - Hartley Patterson - lived only five miles away, so I took my orders round to his house personally for Autumn 1912. NMR again! Pete Cousins, playing Turkey, refused to continue unless the season was replayed - Hartley took no notice and NMR'd Pete as well. He followed up this fine effort by disappearing from the hobby, complete with **War Bulletin**. I think Pete would have won, with me second, but the name should be rated as a 4-way draw.

1974-BJ, in which I played France again, was on incredible business. When the Spring 1901 adjudication arrived, the English orders (attacking France) had been written by someone I'd never heard of. I rang the GM, Brian Yare. "Oh yes," he said, "England missed the deadline, but fortunately so-and-so happened to drop in, so I got him to write some English orders." "Right," I said, "either you readjudicate with England NMRing or I resign." "You don't resign," he said, "my house rules don't allow it." Naturally, I sent no orders... but when the next issue of **Grafeti** arrived there was my name as France, and there were my units moving! Who ordered them? Yare himself, probably. This game should be considered a variant, and is not rated by me.

1974-N, in which I played Germany, is the saddest case. This superb game, which lasted until 1924, had everything: Nicky Palmer playing the Scatter Theory; a devastating stab to take England out in 1903 (a rarity indeed), superb defence by Dave Johnson and Roland Prevot, the two best players I've ever encountered, to

deprive me of what looked a certain win, and a 5-unit Turkey with A(Bul), F(BAR), F(NWG), F(NAO) and F(Cly)! By 1924 Dave Johnson (F) had recovered from 3 centres to 14, but masterly defence by Roland (R) had secured a 4-way draw position, in which I was represented by A(Ber), having at one time had 16 centres. The GM, John Piggott, rightly pointed out that the draw was certain, and called for votes. When **Ethil** failed to arrive, I rang John. "Yes," he said, "**Ethil's** late, but 1974-N is over - everyone voted for the draw." A fitting end to a great game... but, **Ethil** never appeared again, and I myself left the hobby. Many months later I got a letter from Robert Correll, the Canadian who played Turkey. John, it seemed, had let 1974-N be orphaned to **Ode** but had said nothing about the draw vote. Nor apparently had he passed on my permanent order [A(Ber) S RUSSIAN A(Mun)]. I knew nothing of this - I hadn't even opened **Ode**. Why should I? I'd left the hobby, and I'd never played in **Ode** anyway. But the crowning blow was that Robert Correll had also NMR'd... hardly surprising, since his **Ode** had travelled by sea to Canada, taking four months to reach him. As a result the game was conceded to a very surprised Dave Johnson. But it should be rated as a 4-way draw.

Filibuster 7 was the unkindest cut, though. This was my comeback game in 1981, and I was admittedly getting hammered by Geoff Challenger and Doug Wakefield. GM Adrian Baird stayed with us for our anniversary weekend in October, as usual, and I gave him my orders in front of numerous witnesses. Not only an NMR, but Adrian commented "Typical Sharp." Nice to have friends, isn't it?

Reprinted from **Dib Dib Dib** 41

John Marsden's Reply

I must strongly object to Richard Sharp's totally misleading and inaccurate statements regarding the sad end of 1974N (BDC41I) – as he rightly says, one of the finest Diplomacy games ever.

The first thing that has to be said is that I received nothing from John Piggott at all. In fact all the **Ethil** games were delayed several months in re-housing because John kept promising to send me the orders, but never did, until finally I had to ask the new GMs to call for orders to be resubmitted. In the case of 1974N I

could not have been aware of any standing orders, therefore.

I reprinted (**Ode** 2, page 11) the Spring 1924 adjudication verbatim from **Ethil** 23, including the two game-end proposals, both of which were for a concession to France. There was no 4-way draw proposed that season, so it couldn't have passed (it had been defeated the previous season). I then sent copies to all players, Robert's and Dave's by Air Mail. The deadline was only three weeks, and by **Ode** 3 I had only heard from Roland, who vetoed the game-end proposals and proposed the 4-way draw instead. I held the game over.

In due course, Robert Correll wrote to me, accepting any draw that included him, but tendering his resignation because he had lost interest in Diplomacy. He also apologised for the delay in replying! I therefore proposed to put in a standby for Turkey, to avoid unbalancing the game. This produced a howl of complaint from Dave, who pointed out that the game had never used standbys before, and threatening to resign if I used one then. I telephoned John Piggott, who confirmed that standbys had not previously been used, and that if he had still been running the game he would have put Turkey into anarchy.

I therefore adjudicated Autumn 1924 in **Ode** 5, with Turkey in anarchy. This created a "forced win" situation for France, and I therefore conceded the game to Dave.

Richard's piece contains the following untruths:

1. That everyone voted for the draw. The draw proposal appeared in **Ethil** 22 (Autumn 1923), and was vetoed by Dave Johnson. John Piggott knew this because he typed it up for **Ethil** 23, which appeared (eventually) as a supplement to **Megalomania** 14 (which Richard presumably didn't bother to open either, despite it being clearly headed "incorporating **Ethil the Frog** 23").
2. That I sent Robert Correll **Ode** by surface mail. It went by Air Mail Printed Paper Rate, and his reply arrived within ten weeks - which was very kind of him, since he'd dropped out of the Hobby.
3. That I NMR'd Robert. Robert never NMR'd; he resigned and went straight into anarchy, That Dave Johnson was "very surprised", I wanted to either end the game as a draw or put in a standby, to maintain the balance, which

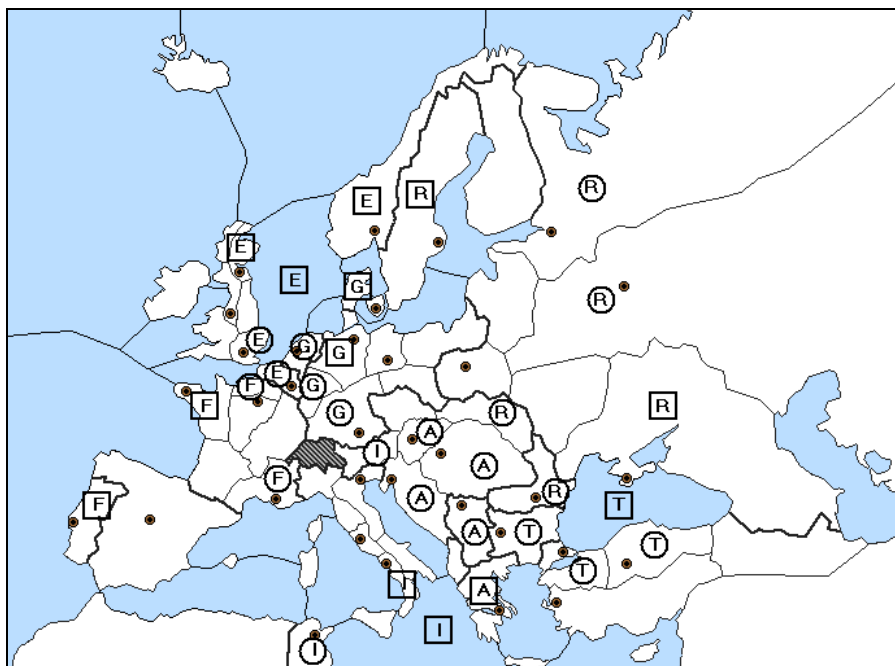
Strange Meeting 3

seemed only fair after so long a break. Dave insisted on his "win", totally devalued though it was, and given the rules as they stood I couldn't deny it to him. I know Roland has never forgiven me for it, but I saw no alternative.

I suggest that Richard checks his facts in future

before accusing people in such fashion. If he wants 1974N re-designated a four-way draw I would be happy to declare it such - but only when I receive a letter from Dave Johnson agreeing to the result.

Reprinted from ***Dib Dib Dib*** 42



ALBION (Autumn 1901)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Douglas Kent) F(Alb) - Gre; A(Ser) s F(Alb) - Gre; A(Bud) - Gal (FAILED)

ENGLAND (Jeremy Tullett) F(NTH) c A(Yor) - Bel; F(NWG) - Nwy; A(Yor) - Bel

FRANCE (Mark Stretch) F(MAO) - Por; A(Mar) - Bur (FAILED); A(Pic) - Bur (FAILED)

GERMANY (Toby Harris) A(Kie) - Hol; F(Den) Stands; A(Mun) - Ruh

ITALY (Mog Firth) A(Ven) - Tyr; F(ION) c A(Apu) - Tun; A(Apu) - Tun

RUSSIA (Robin ap Cynan) A(Gal) s A(Ukr) - Rum (CUT); A(Ukr) - Rum; F(GoB) - Swe; F(Sev) s A(Ukr) - Rum

TURKEY (Ian Pringle) F(Ank) - BLA; A(Bul) - Rum (FAILED); A(Con) - Bul (FAILED)

Autumn 1901 Adjustments:

A: +Gre, +Ser, Bud, Tri, Vie = 5; Gains 2. Builds A(Tri), A(Vie).

E: +Nwy, +Bel, Edi, Lon, Lpl = 5; Gains 2. Builds F(Edi), A(Lon).

F: +Por, Mar, Bre, Par = 4; Gains 1. Builds F(Bre).

G: +Hol, +Den, Ber, Kie, Mun = 5; Gains 2. Builds A(Mun), F(Kie).

I: +Tun, Nap, Rom, Ven = 4; Gains 1. Builds F(Nap).

R: +Rum, +Swe, Sev, Mos, StP, War = 6; Gains 2. Builds A(StP), A(Mos).

T: +Bul, Con, Ank, Smy = 4; Gains 1. Builds A(Ank).

AUTUMN 1901 DEADLINE = FRIDAY 23rd JANUARY 2009

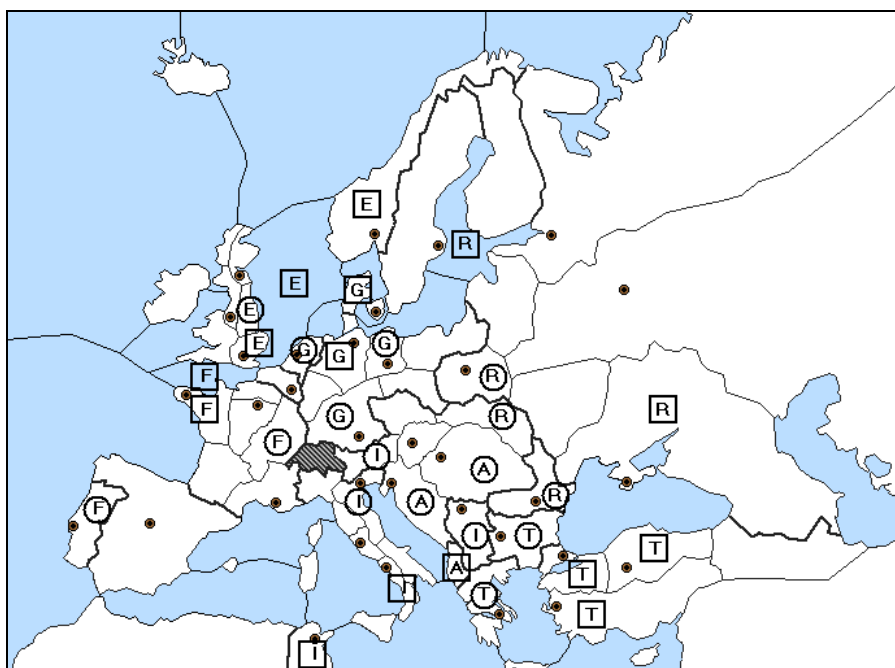
Press:

Serbian autumns are cold, dark, and heavy...just the way he liked them. Overcast skies and strong winds which burn the skin helped him feel nearly alive again. Bundled in furs to blend easily with the common folk, he moved from town to town, sampling the local cuisine and the local peasantry. Both exceeded his expectations.

The local constable in Belgrade was an issue, as his grandfather before him had been. So he kept to the smaller villages, always taking care to be noticed and welcomed in at least one out of three regions. In this way his cover as a travelling aristocrat remained believable. But, as always, eventually the number of missing villagers

would begin to accumulate and suspicion would be aroused.

Before that happened, however, there was always the need of the populace to feel protected from outside forces. The Cossacks moving through the mountains of Galicia, and likely into neighbouring Rumania, was already causing rumbling among the common folk. It was known that he had considerable contacts, and had marshalled forces in the name of defending the homeland. This, too, gave him a measure of personal security. As long as he could keep the borders secure, the militia would continue to look the other way in regards to his peculiar habits, his scarcity during daylight hours, and the occasional maiden's body drained of blood found along the edge of the forest.



BELLICUS (Autumn 1901)

- AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Terry Hayes) A(Vie) - Tri; F(Alb) s A(Vie) - Tri; A(Ser) - Bud
ENGLAND (Smiley McKinnon) F(NTH) c A(Yor) - Bel; F(NWG) - Nwy; A(Yor) - Bel (FAILED)
FRANCE (Pat Vogelsang) F(MAO) - ENG; A(Spa) - Por; A(Bur) - Bel (FAILED)
GERMANY (Beartla de Burca) A(Ruh) - Mun; A(Kie) - Hol; F(Den) - Swe (FAILED)
ITALY (David Latimer) A(Ven) - Tyr; F(ION) - Tun; A(Tri) - Ser

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RUSSIA (Chris Babcock) F(GoB) - Swe (FAILED); A(War) - Gal; A(Ukr) - Rum; F(Sev) - BLA (FAILED)

TURKEY (Phil Amos) A(Bul) - Gre; A(Con) - Bul; F(Ank) - BLA (FAILED)

Autumn 1901 Adjustments:

A: Tri, Bud, Vie = 3; No change.

E: +Nwy, Edi, Lon, Lpl = 4; Gains 1. Builds F(Lon).

F: +Por, Bre, Mar, Par = 4; Gains 1. Builds F(Bre).

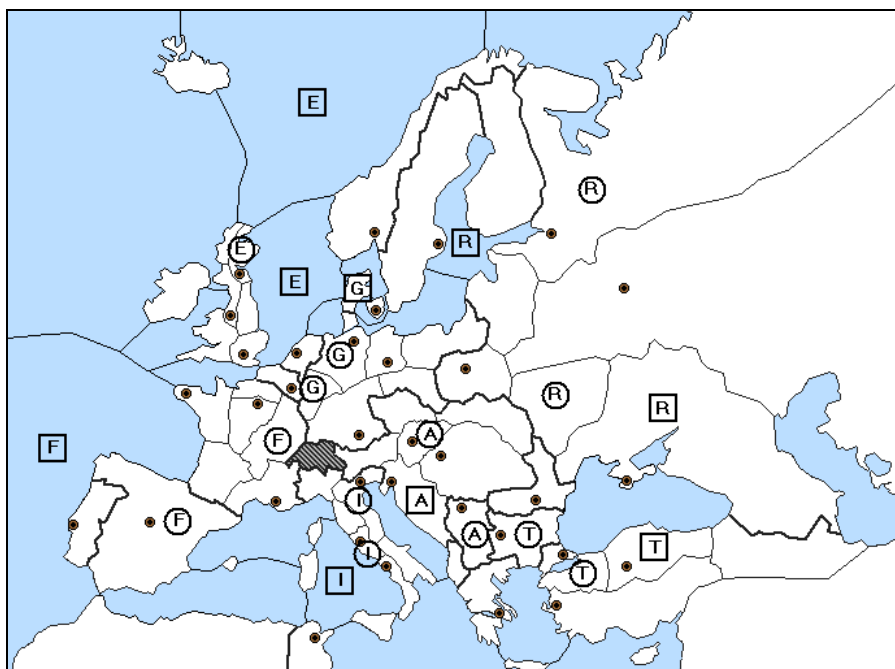
G: Mun, +Hol, +Den, Ber, Kie = 5; Gains 2. Builds A(Ber), F(Kie).

I: +Tun, +Ser, Nap, Rom, Ven = 5; Gains 2. Builds A(Ven), F(Nap).

R: +Rum, Sev, Mos, StP, War = 5; Gains 1. Builds A(War).

T: +Gre, +Bul, Ank, Con, Smy = 5; Gains 2. Builds F(Smy), F(Con).

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CHIMAERA (Spring 1901)

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Tim Deacon) F(Tri) - Ven (FAILED); A(Vie) - Tyr (FAILED); A(Bud) - Ser

ENGLAND (Nigel Pepper) F(Lon) - NTH; F(Edi) - NWG; A(Lpl) - Edi

FRANCE (Robert Jewett) F(Bre) - MAO; A(Mar) - Spa; A(Par) - Bur

GERMANY (John Wilman) A(Mun) - Ruh; A(Ber) - Kie; F(Kie) - Den

ITALY (Jimmy Cowie) A(Ven) - Tyr (FAILED); A(Rom) - Ven (FAILED); F(Nap) - TYS

RUSSIA (Mike Oliveri) F(StP) sc - GoB; F(Sev) - BLA (FAILED); A(War) - Ukr; A(Mos) - StP

TURKEY (Eric Knibb) A(Con) - Bul; A(Smy) - Con; F(Ank) - BLA (FAILED)

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BACKBIT

I used to assume that US democracy was alive and well and it is only recently I have realised how corrupt US politics appears to be at a State level. I am not just talking about Governor Blagejovich of Illinois being found to have have "sold" Barack Obama;s Senate seat, nor even that Blagejovich's Republican predecessor as Governor, George Ryan, is serving a six-year sentence for racketeering, fraud, bribery and money laundering. Let's look at Sarah Palin's Alaska. One of Alaska's Senators, Ted Stevens, a fellow Republican, was convicted of last year on charges of corruption, but insisted on standing for election again and duly lost his seat. The other Alaska Senator is Lisa Murkowski – who is the daughter of the previous Alaska Senator Frank Murkowski, who when he became Governor exercisde his new-found power to nominate someone to fill the vacant Senate seat by nominating his daughter!

Why on Earth do the Americans give Governors so much power to nominate people to the Senate (as opposed to having a by-election), without any sort of democratic approval process? And then let them get away with nominating members of their own family? Madness.

WAITING LIST

Regular Diplomacy (email only): *This list is for people who only want to communicate by email.* 6-7 wanted. Dipper McGregg (6 wanted)

Regular Diplomacy (email and postal): *This list is for players who are happy to write to a player who doesn't have Internet access.* Garyth Wright (6 wanted)

Any demand for anything else?

This was

Strange Meeting

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Email: stephen@strangemeeting.org.uk

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MIDNIGHT (GMT)
FRIDAY 23rd JANUARY 2009**

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